

WILLIS STREET DISTRICT

Willis Street was originally part of the John K. Longwell Estate, "Emerald Hill". Beginning in the late 19th century, Longwell, and later his heir, Sallie, began selling lots around the Court House. From the beginning these lots were sold to Late Victorian men of the City who erected on their tree shaded acre sites, commodious, fine, somewhat rambling homes. These homes are evocative of a class that was moderately affluent and seeking comfort in a restrained way. This restraint, this conservatism, fits in well with the City's traditionalism. Dating from the 1890's and among the earliest houses on the street were the Allender House (now destroyed) built as a summer house in the mid 1890's, and the Diffenbaugh-Weant House. Both these houses, as well as the roughly contemporaneous Myers House, 101 Willis Street, and the twin unit built by J. W. Hering, 156-162 Willis Street, show a desire for dignified comfort. The desire has lasted throughout the street's 90-year history, up through the contemporary brick rowhouse/apartments. Thus, the street can be viewed as an extension of Court House Square. This area (q.v.) was the place for 19th century local dignitaries to build; an area characterised by the traditionally-built homes of the doctors, lawyers, and judges. As the square about the Court House itself was built up, Longwell began selling land stretching west from the Court House, along what is now Willis Street. The homes, that were built during Longwell's lifetime reflect the already established traditions of the Court House Square. These traditions were continued after the Longwell farm was subdivided in 1907 and sold at public auction, as indicated by the auction catalog's reference to the lots as being "mansion sites."

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

2-20-84 # 540
MACI # 01 1540-62

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Willis Street District

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Willis Street

CITY, TOWN

Westminster

___ VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

7

STATE

Maryland

COUNTY

Carroll

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

☒ DISTRICT

___ BUILDING(S)

___ STRUCTURE

___ SITE

___ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

☒ PUBLIC

☒ PRIVATE

___ BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

___ IN PROCESS

___ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED

___ UNOCCUPIED

___ WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

☒ YES: RESTRICTED

___ YES: UNRESTRICTED

___ NO

PRESENT USE

___ AGRICULTURE

___ COMMERCIAL

___ EDUCATIONAL

___ ENTERTAINMENT

___ GOVERNMENT

___ INDUSTRIAL

___ MILITARY

___ MUSEUM

___ PARK

___ PRIVATE RESIDENCE

___ RELIGIOUS

___ SCIENTIFIC

___ TRANSPORTATION

___ OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Mixed

Telephone #:

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

___ VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Carroll County Office Building

STREET & NUMBER

Center Street

CITY, TOWN

Westminster

STATE

Maryland

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

None

DATE

___ FEDERAL ___ STATE ___ COUNTY ___ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION**CONDITION**☒ EXCELLENT☐ GOOD☐ FAIR☐ DETERIORATED☐ RUINS☐ UNEXPOSED**CHECK ONE**☐ UNALTERED☐ ALTERED**CHECK ONE**☒ ORIGINAL SITE☐ MOVED DATE _____**DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE**

Willis Street is an east-west thoroughfare in the City of Westminster connecting City Hall (q.v.) and the Court House Square (q.v.); East Main Street is about 250' south of Willis Street. The thirty lots that front it are of varied depth ranging from 100' (the shallowest lots on the south side) to over 300' (the deeper lots on the north side). Longwell Avenue and Center Street bisect Willis Street, and several smaller streets and alleys run off of it along its approximate-y 2,000 foot length. Willis Street, along with its one terminus, Court Square, is generally considered the prime residential area in Westminster. The first house was built on it approximately 90 years ago. Originally part of the John K. Longwell Estate, the street now presents an atmosphere of tree lined comfort, and solidity, an atmosphere created by fine old oaks and elm and maple trees, as well as by the solid homes and apartments that front it. Uniformly is not the right way to describe the street, as there is a great variety in building styles (and eras). However, despite the scale and age differences, there is a uniformity present, here, a uniformity of comfort and solidity. Several houses present are of note as separate structures: the Weant House (171 Willis Street), the Babylon House (131 Willis Street), 101 Willis Street, and the interesting double house, 156-162 Willis Street, are all powerful independant structures. Yet their noteworthiness is amplified when viewed in conjunction with the other and varied, structures on the street. (For all these earlier named structures, see individual survey forms.) An interesting smaller house is the "George Mather House" 121 Willis Street. Built on lot 71 of Longwell's subdivision, this brown shingled bungalow is a local example of a very popular early 20th century style.

Another national style present on this street is the Georgian revival. This style finds adherants in the Weis House, 174 Willis Street, and in the Shriver-Wisner House, 145 Willis Street. Both are two-story double-pile five-bay central-hall houses, the former executed in flemish bond brick, the later in white painted clapboard. Both houses possess, as one would expect with a well executed house of this tyle, fine pedimental entrance doors and various other details. One long-time Willis Street resident notes that her mother-in-law, another long-time resident, believed that no. 145 Willis Street was designed by Stanford White; whether this is true or not (nothing has been found to prove or disprove the theory), it shows the respect with which buildings on the street are generally accorded.

More irregular in form, reflecting the freedom in design that erupted in the City the turn of this century, are three buildings now used as an apartment, the Reese-Weant Building, (179 Willis Street), the Brooks-Dyer building (185 Willis Street) and the Vanderford-Miller Pile at the corner of Center and Willis Street. The former two buildings

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

Mixed

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

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CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Consisting of approximately 30 lots on both sides of Willis Street; Willis Street runs between City Hall and Court House Square in Westminster.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE

COUNTY

STATE

COUNTY

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Christopher Weeks, Consultant

December

ORGANIZATION

Westminster Historical Sites Survey

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

c/o City Hall - Public Works Department

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Westminster

STATE

Maryland

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 267-1438

are frame; the second is brick. While the corner building displays many alterations and additions, there is a certain loose unity about it. The Reese-Weant House impresses through its solidness and power, and the Brooks-Dyer House impresses through its airy feeling, a feeling heightened by the three tier front porch. More recent additions on the south side of the street are the two groups of row house-apartments (nos. 90-92-94-96, and 102-108) and the Palaia house, no. 118. These modern structures are generally brick, but are placed off the street which helps them blend in with the older, larger, buildings to provide an air that has been described, not to flippant, as being similar to an MGM set of the 1940's, or a street where Andy Hardy might feel at home.

680/0



CANN 540

Willu St. District

J-12

6072

750/0



Chk-540

#173

75%

102
p. 102

~~CLXVII - A~~

Shriver - Wisner House

Willis St.

(53...)



CPK- 540



CPR-540



CAR-540



CARR-540



CARR-540



CARR- 540



CARL-540



C. Ann- 540



CARK-540



CARR 540



Canh 540



CAR-540